



Photo: CAPT. BLENCOWE.

QUAIL DECOYS, KAVIRONDO.

THE BIRDS OF KENYA AND UGANDA.

PART IV.

by

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Part four of the series on the Birds of Kenya and Uganda completes the Francolin and Quail. We do not claim that the notes so far published are complete, since they are based almost entirely on the observations and records of one individual; we therefore take this opportunity of suggesting to members that if they have records or notes connected with the birds dealt with in the series, these should be communicated to the Editor and made available to fellow members.

PHASIANIDAE.

GENUS—PTILOPACHUS.

Ptilopachus petrosus florentiae, Og. Grant. Kenya Rock Bantam.
P.P. KENIENSIS, Mearns, Syn.
Ref. Og.-Grant, B.B.O.C., lxxiii., 1900.
Type locality, Gessema, Northern Frontier.

Distribution: Rocky hills N.W. Northern Guasso Nyiro, Matthew's Range, west to Ngobotok and Suk; Rudolf and Moroto to Kakamari in Karamoja.

DESCRIPTION: MALE ADULT.

Head and neck brown, each feather with a dark shaft streak, greyish white margins inwardly accentuated with dark brown. The feathers of the supercilium and forehead, narrow and pointed. A large bare red patch surrounds the eye. Earcoverts uniform brownish. Feathers of lower neck and chest lighter ochreous-brown with wide white margins and distinct shaft streaks and sub-marginal line. The sub-marginal black tends to invade the marginal white in the feathers of the breast. Mantle, scapulars, coverts, and rump, blackish brown vermiculated marginally with whitish and centrally with ochreous and black. Upper tail-coverts similar but vermiculations much finer. Outer webs of primaries and secondaries blackish-brown vermiculated with lighter brown; rectrices likewise vermiculated.

Centre of breast uniform buff; sides of breast and flanks brownish buff with irregular marginal bars of white and blackish, and with central chestnut and black shaft-streaks. Abdomen blackish-brown with ill-defined greyish-buff barring. Under tail-coverts blackish-brown with fine lighter brown vermiculations towards ends.

Thighs greyish-brown with black and buffy barring. Base of bill, dull crimson, shading to horn-yellow at tip of mandibles. Legs dull coral red, or pink, toes darker. Iris ochreous-brown.

FEMALE:

Very like the male but smaller and with less brownish-chestnut on the flanks.

JUVENILE:

The half-grown young is more heavily barred on the flanks, breast, and mantle, and shows only a trace of the buff breast patch.

HABITS:

This curious Francolin which is so extraordinarily like a "Bantam" fowl is, as its name implies, an inhabitant of the rocky mountains and Kopjes of the drier parts of Kenya and Uganda. Rough boulder-strewn, bush-covered hillsides form its principal habitat, and in such a place it is difficult to procure. It is loth to take flight—instead it runs and scrambles from rock to rock, or dodges in and out of the boulders with such speed that a "snapshot" is the only possible chance of securing the bird.

My head collector reports that stalking and "lying-up" offer the best chance of getting in touch with this bird. The agility of the Rock-Bantam is remarkable—they think nothing of scaling a rock-face which is almost perpendicular. When excited, the bird carries its tail in a vertical position, with feathers somewhat compressed, and with the long coverts of rump and tail shed to either side. In this attitude the bird is like a cock Bantam. The call is a whistling wee-hi-u.

One meets with these birds in pairs or small coveys of six to eight, and in favoured localities there may be more than one covey on the hillside. We have not taken the eggs, but Admiral Lynes describes those of the race *emini*, as "pale stone-colour" with a matt surface, laid in a shallow depression at the base of a tree or stone; well concealed.

The food consists of green shoots, seeds, and insects in their larval form.

***Ptilopachus petrosus emini*, Neum. Emin's Rock-Bantam.**

Ref. Neum.

Type locality, Fadiloek, Nile Prov.

Distribution: Uganda, north-western area, Nile Province.

DESCRIPTION: MALE ADULT.

Differs from the race *florentiae*, in being less dark brown above, and with finer black bars on the flanks. The centre of the feathers on the mantle and back are chestnut; while the flanks have wide chestnut shaft-streaks.

FEMALE:

Very like the male but smaller, and with less chestnut on the flanks.

JUVENILE:

I am unacquainted with the young, neither does there appear to be a description of it.

HABITS:

As for the previous race.

GENUS COTURNIX.

Coturnix coturnix coturnix, Linn. Common, or European Quail.

Ref. Linn. Syst, Nat., 1758.

Type locality, Sweden.

Distribution: A winter migrant to Uganda and Kenya.

DESCRIPTION: MALE ADULT.

Forehead and crown blackish-brown, each feather with wide buffy brown tips. A buff line runs down the centre of the crown to the naps where it expands and is broken up. Lores and supercilium white or buffy white, the superciliary line extending to the sides of the nape. A brown line extends from just above the gape, below the eye through the lower part of the earcoverts, then down the side of the neck. Chin and throat white or buff, the latter with a wide central black wedge-shaped mark, base downwards, from the lateral aspect of which the black extends upwards in a curving line to the ear-coverts; thus dividing the white of the throat. Back and sides of the neck rufous-brown, with black blotches and white shaft-streaks. Exposed portions of feathers of the upper side blackish-brown, with rufescent or brown-buff bars and tips, finely vermiculated with greyish; centre of feathers of mantle, back, scapulars and upper tail-coverts with sharp-pointed buff shaft-streaks outlined with black; those on the mantle narrow. Wing-coverts olive-brown with buff bars and whitish shafts; lesser coverts olive-brown with buff tips. Primaries and outer secondaries tipped and barred with buff; inner secondaries with black and buff bars extending across both webs.

Chest and upper breast orange ochreous, with white or buff shaftstreaks and tips. Sides of breast and flanks buff with wide

whitish-buff shaft-streak outlined with black and chestnut; margins tail-coverts buff. Wings 100-115 mm.

FEMALE:

Above as in the male; throat without the central black area but black lateral lines sometimes present, often reduced to a few black spots. Chest buff, with narrow white shafts, and some blackish blotches; rest of underside as in the male, but with slight barring on the breast. Flanks not so decidedly coloured and with rather more distinct black marks. Bill greyish brown, legs and toes yellowish-pink; Iris light brown.

JUVENILE:

Very like the female, but stripes on the back much narrower, and the underside has a more mottled appearance.

HABITS:

The European Quail has seldom been recorded from Kenya or Uganda. We have taken them in parts of Busoga, and Stoneham states "they are common" during the winter months in the Mtama fields near Kitgum, Nile Province. In Kenya we obtained specimens from the Athi Plains, Loita, and Serengeti, Kisumu area, at Shimoni on the coast, and again on the Juba River. Records shew them to be here in November and to remain till March.

Grasslands and cultivations are the haunt of this bird. They are close squatters and are flushed with great difficulty; this characteristic no doubt accounts for the fact that the species has seldom been taken.

During a visit to Kavirondo I came across a set of Quail snares and "call birds," in baskets. The birds were calling lustily, but there was a peculiarity in some of the calls which attracted my attention. I got the boy in charge to lower the baskets, and in three out of twelve, were European Quail, two males and a female. I sent for the owner and questioned him about the birds; he knew they were different from the rest, being larger and paler, but what pleased him most was, "their call attracted the wild birds better."

They had been in captivity two years!

The European Quail has two calls, a soft "pew-pew" uttered by both sexes when feeding; and the call of the male which is somewhat like "wet-twi-twit."

The species does not breed in either Kenya or Uganda. The food consists largely of seeds and fresh vegetable matter, but insects are also eagerly sought for.

Coturnix coturnix africana, Temm. and Schl. African or Cape Quail.

Ref. Temm. and Schl. F. Jap., 1850.

Type locality, South Africa, Cape.

Distribution: In suitable localities throughout Kenya and Uganda.

DESCRIPTION: Very like the European bird but darker.

MALE, ADULT:

Forehead and crown to nape, black, with wide rusty brown tips. A white or buffy line runs down the centre of the crown to the nape where it widens out into the neck hackles; there is also a narrow white sub-marginal line to the crown. Supercilium white or buffy extending from the nostrils over the eye and down the neck band. Loral spot blackish, surmounted by rusty brown or chestnut, which colour extends over the cheeks, side of head, chin, and throat, to the upper breast.

The ear-coverts are dark-brown or blackish. A blackish line starts just posterior to the eye, passes through the ear-coverts and then divides into two, the upper branch extending down the neck, the other encircles the sides of the throat. The centre of the throat is ornamented with a wide anchor-shaped black patch, the arms of which pass upwards in a curve to below the ear-coverts. Sides of breast, back of neck and mantle rufescent brown, each feather with wide sharply pointed shaft-streaks white or buff in colour, outlined in jet black, in many cases the black being dentate marginally. The hackle-like shaft streaks are wider on the lateral aspect of the mantle and are reduced to streaks centro-dorsally.

The feathers of the scapulars, back, and rump to upper tail-coverts, are black with transverse wide V shaped buff, greyish, or rusty bars; the lateral scapular feathers have wide, sharply pointed shaft-streaks; and similarly coloured feathers ornament the sides of the back, rump, and upper tail-coverts, thus forming a latero-dorsal line on either side. In many examples there is often a second line along the lateral aspect of the rump. Lesser wing-coverts uniform olive-grey-brown with paler tips; coverts similarly coloured but having in addition white shafts and buffy marginal bars. Primaries and secondaries greyish-brown, with rusty bars on the outer webs; the outermost primary and primary coverts with buff margins. Neck band and upper chest rusty or chestnut brown with buffy hackle shaft-streaks; breast more uniform rusty, each feather with a very narrow buff shaft. Sides of chest and flanks buffy with wide buff or whitish shaft lines outlined in black, distally shading into rich chestnut, and decorated with black spots and bars. Rest of underside including under tail-coverts rusty-buff.

Bill grey-brown; legs yellowish-pink; Irish light brown; Wings 100-110 m.m.

FEMALE:

Above very like the male but less rufescent; the cheeks and sides of the neck are buff, while the throat is buffy-white. The side of the head is ornamented with a black line which, starting from the gape, runs below the ear-coverts and down the side of the neck. The feathers of the breast and chest have black margins, giving to these areas a somewhat barred appearance. Flanks as in the male, but not so rufous. Rest of underside dirty buffy-white.

JUVENILE:

Very like the female but striping narrower and barring more distinct; the underside with a mottled appearance, especially on the breast.

HABITS:

In habits the Cape Quail resembles the European bird. It frequents grassy plains and cultivated land more especially shambas which are lying fallow. It is a difficult bird to flush and runs and squats rather than take flight; when it does get up, it flies with rapid wing beats, glides, then drops suddenly into covert; once on the ground it runs, then lies close, so that unless hard-pressed it will not get up a second time. On practically every occasion, the species is met with accidentally; or perhaps one may follow up a calling bird, if the latter then the chances are that it will not be located, for the call is certainly one of the most annoying things I know of. The bird is an adept at moderating the pitch of its voice and its carrying power, also its direction, so that the call seems to come from first here then from the opposite direction; in other words it is a first-class ventriloquist. The actual call is very like that of its European cousin, but is perhaps more metallic, less limpid.

Of local migration there is a certain amount of evidence, but the bird is so scarce that the data is meagre and insufficient.

This Quail breeds in both Kenya and Uganda; the main season, based on the appearance of sexually active birds, appears to be between December and January to March, but here also data is lacking. Coveys have been noted in May and July.

The nest is a mere depression in the ground into which a few grasses are added; it may be situated under a tuft of grass or alongside a large stone. Six to nine eggs are laid, varying somewhat in ground colour from buff to stone-grey, blotched with blackish or deep olive-brown. Some eggs are very sparingly marked while others are a mass of blotches. They measure roughly 30 x 22-24 mm. In shape they are a pointed oval. Seeds and insects are the staple diet, though they also feed largely on greens.

Coturnix delegorguei, Deleg. Harlequin or Black-breasted Quail.

Ref. Deleg. Voy. Afr., Aust., 1847.

Type locality, Upper Limpopo River.

Distribution: Throughout Kenya and Uganda; Resident, and migratory.

DESCRIPTION: MALE ADULT.

Crown to nape black with slight brownish tips; an ochreous central line extending from the forehead to the neck-bank. Forehead narrowly white and continuous with a white superciliary stripe which extends back into the neck. Crown with very narrow sub-marginal white line. Lores white except for a black spot in front and above the eye. Ear-coverts brownish-black. Chin, cheeks and throat white, divided by a wedge-shaped black throat-patch with lateral basal arms which extend upwards to the ear-coverts; a further black line joins the extremity of this arm to the gape. The white throat is distally bordered by black. Back of neck and mantle brownish, each feather with lance-shaped central white streak bordered with black, those on the latter area with narrow stripe and lateral buff bars. Sides of neck and breast rufescent chestnut with narrow white shafts, black bordered; centre of chest, breast, and lower flank feathers jet black; other flank feathers rich rufescent-chestnut, with black shaft-stripes, widest at extremity.

Abdomen and vent, and under tail-coverts pale chestnut; in some specimens the belly is buffy with blackish bars. Scapulars, back and rump and upper tail-coverts greyish-brown, with narrow wavy cross-bars of buff, outlined in black and brown, those of the rump having wide black bars. The scapular feathers have white shaft streaks outlined in black, while the dorso-lateral feathers of the rump have conspicuous buff streaks accentuated by black outlines. The lateral series of rump feathers also have narrow buff shaft streaks.

Wing-coverts and lesser coverts grey-brown, with buffy or greyish wavy cross-bars outlined in black. Primaries uniform grey-brown; secondaries the same but barred, mostly on the outer web, with greyish-buff. Rectrices blackish-brown with wavy buffy bars.

Bill black; Feet and legs pink or brownish-flesh; Iris brown. Wings 87-95 mm.

FEMALE:

Above similar to the male; throat buffy white demarcated distally and separated from the chest by a series of black-barred feathers; a few black-tipped feathers below the eye and down the side of the neck. Chest and side of breast, greyish-buff or rufous with pale tips and buff shafts; breast and flanks rich rufescent buff, the latter with paler shaft streaks and irregular blackish bars; centre of belly pale

buff. There is a considerable degree of variation in the colour of the females, especially on the lower surface. Very rarely a female may assume male coloration.

JUVENILE:

Very like the female, but stripes narrower; barring coarser; under surface somewhat spotted; flanks more spotted than streaked. Bill horn-brown.

YOUNG IN DOWN:

Crown rufescent buff with two central parallel black lines reaching to the nape and joining the centro-dorsal streak of the back; a dorso-lateral patch of black on the hind quarters; under side rich buff, paler on the throat and belly, these being yellowish. Length 50 mm.

HABITS:

This bird has a wide distribution and is found from the coast, inland, reaching to 8,000 feet. It is decidedly more common in Kenya than Uganda. Many birds are undoubtedly resident, but their numbers are annually augmented by thousands which migrate to these parts either to breed, or on passage. Dates of arrival and departure are not consistent year after year, so it is impossible to give a definite migratory or "Quail season." Weather conditions must have an appreciable effect, for undoubtedly the nesting season is affected thereby. It would appear however that the local birds become most evident just before the breeding season, when they start calling, and after the broods are on the wing. The nesting season according to dates recorded, either of clutches found or breeding birds shot, would appear to be April to July; November to January.

My records shew that Quail were passing over Nairobi in large flocks in March and April, 1919, dozens meeting their death or being maimed by coming into contact with the telephone wires at the Exchange. Again, there is a similar entry for October 20. Regarding other parts of Kenya, the following may be noted as indicating "numbers or large coveys": Athi Plains, September; Kapiti, September and October; Simba, April and July; Serengeti, September; Kisumu, July. It is thus difficult to decide on a definite "Quail season."

The Harlequin is the common species of the two territories, and is unmistakable both as regards its coloration and its call. Unless breeding, they are usually found in coveys of half a dozen or more, but they get up in ones or twos, though several coveys may occupy quite a small area. The type of country frequented is the open grass plains and hillsides where native cultivations have been allowed to lie fallow. They make their presence known by the call of the male

which is an oft repeated sharp whistling "huit-whit," the last syllable higher than the first and shorter.

Morning and evening are the principal times at which the males call, but on several occasions I have heard them call the whole day long when it has been dull and working up for rain. The female has a low call like "tuit" which is uttered in answer to the male, or when feeding. This same note is uttered by the male and appears to be used as a signal of threatened danger; it is then sharper and louder. As the breeding season approaches the males are persistent in their calls and become exceedingly pugnacious and fight with one another; they do some surprisingly high jumps when trying to avoid one another. If one bird gets a grip of his opponent he jumps about, shakes and worries his foe as a dog worries a rat! I have often watched these battles take place in the wild and so engrossed have the birds been in their mutual hate that I have been able to secure both by putting a butterfly net over them.

These Quail lay quite large eggs, measuring 26-30 x 20-25 mm. of a varying ground colour, either bluish, dirty white to cream, or greyish, almost uniform or heavily marked with fine blackish-brown spots or heavily blotched with purple-brown and blackish. Incubation lasts 14 to 16 days. The clutch may consist of six to ten eggs. These Quail make very interesting Aviary birds and tame readily. They breed well in captivity if the pairs are kept separate and are in a large run. The following record is of interest: a pair were put into an aviary with insectivorous birds; they commenced to nest in December and by January 3rd the clutch of ten eggs was laid. A day or two after, much to my surprise the hen started to lay again, and deposited another clutch on the top of the first one. She made no attempt to brood and after a break of four days she started to lay a further clutch. This went on with varying breaks until the 16th of August, when she became ill and died; the cause of death being the impaction of two fully shelled eggs in the oviduct! The total eggs laid were 122. Had she not become "egg bound" there is no saying how many more eggs she would have laid.

The courting of the female is interesting; the cock starts calling, his whole body held in an upright position; after a few moments he resumes the usual pose, then brings his breast close to the ground and shakes his body from side to side, the while uttering a low "tuit-tuit" note. The female meanwhile goes on eating or preening as though nothing were going on around her. The male then calls again and sidles up to the hen and when almost up to her he bobs his head up and down rapidly, with the neck bent to one side; he then picks up a bit of grass or a stone and throws it over his back. This action appears to arouse her and she submits, after which both birds pick up grass and toss it over their backs.

In the wild state the food consists principally of seeds and insects; they are very partial to white ants.

When the grass is damp the birds are loth to get up; one can almost tread on them before they will take wing. I have on occasions actually caught a squatting bird by hand. If the birds are lying close it is no uncommon thing for a badly trained dog to creep up to a "sitter" and capture it as it squats. I once possessed a rascal of a half pointer-retriever who, when the Quail were in, would go off by himself and come back with two or three birds which he had smelt out and pounced upon; he never ate them himself. Apart from domestic enemies, the Harlequin suffers from the depredations of ground vermin, such as the Wild Cat, Mongoose, Serval, and Jackal, and is frequently taken by Falcons and other predaceous birds.

In certain localities these Quail nest in regular colonies, thus on the Juba and parts of the Frontier as well as on the Serengeti dozens of nests were located in the short grass in quite a small area.

Certain tribes in Kenya are partial to Quail as an item of diet, and taking advantage of the periodic migrations, have become expert trappers and snarers. Pre-eminent amongst these are the Kavirondo. True it is that only certain families in certain villages are the professional trappers, but these are such experts that the method they adopt is deadly in its effect, and is responsible for the diminution of the Quail to quite an appreciable extent. The method depends on the susceptibility of the species to respond to the call of a decoy; the decoy in this instance being captive birds which are kept for the purpose. Each bird is kept separate in a small wicker or reed-work basket with a handle at the top; these baskets are strung on a long rope and fastened to the end of a long pole.* The number of decoys used varies and depends on the abundance or paucity of wild birds, the more the less. A suitable site is chosen, usually one where the bush is stunted and the grass only moderately long; in the centre of the patch the decoy pole is placed, and paths are roughly cut in radiating fashion from this point; branches of thorn or bits of stick are placed as barriers at intervals of four to five feet, leaving just sufficient opening for a bird to pass; the grass alongside the barrier is twisted up to form an arch and from this the deadly noose of fibre is suspended. The snares may be in series of two or three circles of varying diameters. The wiley native has learnt that a travelling quail will rather use a run than force its way through thick grass, thus the deluded bird following up the call of the decoy approaches along the runs and is caught. Some of the victims become strangled, others survive until the periodical visits of the snare owner; the survivors are not killed outright, but are taken from the snare, the legs and wings are broken and the helpless victims are cast into a basket. Such birds go to the villages, but if birds are destined for

* See *frontispiece*.

the township market they are spared the bone-breaking and are packed into baskets, sometimes a dozen in a basket hardly more than a foot in diameter. Such practices exist to-day, but owing to the influence of officials, more humane treatment is the rule. It is to be hoped that the new Game Bird Protection Act will be so administered as to put a stop to the wholesale capture of Quail in Kavirondo and Maragoli. Such stoppage will inflict no hardship on the natives. The decoys are well fed, being given a lavish diet of seeds, Whimbi and Mtama, and fresh insects in the form of live white ants; they are also regularly watered. The life of a decoy is anything up to five years.

The call of the Harlequin is easy to imitate, so much so that I have not infrequently been able to call up wild birds to within a couple of yards of where I have been concealed.

GENUS **EXCALFACTORIA**, Bp.

Excalfactoria adansonii, Verr. Blue Quail.

Ref. Verr. Red. Mag. Z., 1851.

Type locality, South Africa.

Distribution: Suitable localities throughout Kenya and Uganda.

DESCRIPTION: MALE ADULT.

Forehead, crown, mantle, back and centre of rump, dark slaty grey-black, the back and rump with black blotches. Scapulars, wing-coverts and sides of rump bright chestnut, with slate-grey shaft streaks; lesser coverts slate blue; primaries and secondaries grey-brown. Chest breast and flanks bluish-slate-grey, the latter with bright chestnut margins. Centre of belly greyish-black. Loral stripe white; a black line extends from the gape, passes below the eye to the lower edge of the ear-coverts, then on to the side of the neck encircling the wide white neck gorget; chin and throat with a jet black triangle, from the basal angles of which run curved lines which join the blackish ear-coverts. Tail dark slate, entirely covered over by the long upper tail-coverts. Eyes crimson; bill, blue-black; legs and feet pinkish-yellow. Wings 75-82 mm.

FEMALE:

Adult. Quite unlike the male. Forehead and crown ochreous brown, the latter with black tips; a central coronal line of white extends to the nape. Lores, supercilium, cheeks lighter ochreous, the last with black spots. Ear-coverts dark brown. Feathers of hind neck, mantle and scapulars, back and rump, ochreous-brown irregularly banded with blackish-brown and with large black blotches towards the tips; most feathers with a narrow white shaft stripe. Throat rufescent buff with black spots and tips. Sides of the chest,

breast and flanks buffy white with brown-black wavy bands. Abdomen and thighs greyish-buff, narrowly banded with greyish-black. Inner secondaries with fine buff vermiculations, outer secondaries and primaries uniform greyish-black. Wing-coverts rufescent buff vermiculated and barred with black.

JUVENILE:

Like the female, but the underside is paler, and the barring is not so distinct. The upper side is more barred and browner; the white shaft stripes are not so pronounced. The nestling chick is unknown to me.

HABITS:

The Blue Quail is by far the daintiest and most beautiful of the quail family in this country; the contrast between the sexes adding to their attractiveness. It is a great pity that the species is not more plentiful. It appears to have a marked preference for localities where the grass is not too long or too dense, and this fact, no doubt, tends towards its undoing—it falls an easy prey to enemies of the air as well as ground vermin. It is undoubtedly a sluggish bird which feeds well and is hard to flush. When once on the wing they go fast but soon drop into cover. Every example that I have handled has been fat!

The species is usually found in pairs or small coveys, made up of a family party. We found them breeding at the coast in October, and in Uganda, Mpumu, in April; while published records give October, November, and June as months in which nests have been recorded. The breeding season is thus rather uncertain. The nest is a shallow depression lined with bits of grass, and situated under a tuft of grass or small herb; the eggs are putty coloured, and six usually form the clutch.

The species is a local migrant, appearing in a given locality for a month or two then moving off, but in what direction and with what object we do not know.

The call note is unknown to me; the only sound I have heard is a whistling note when a cock has been suddenly flushed.

FAMILY.—TURNICIDAE.

GENUS.—**TURNIX, Bonn.**

Turnix sylvatica alleni, Mearns. Common Button Quail.

T.s. lepurana, auct.

Ref. Mearns, S.M. Col., Vol. 56, No. 20, 1911.

Type locality, N. Guasso Nyiro, N.F.D.

Distribution: Kenya and Uganda in suitable localities.

DESCRIPTION: MALE ADULT.

Feathers of crown blackish-brown, with paler brown tips; a centro-coronal line of buff or white. Supercilium, lores and cheeks, buffy, each feather with blackish marginal tips; chin and throat pale buffy-white, or white. Lower neck rufescent brown with bands and black shaft streaks. Mantle, scapulars, rump, and upper tail-coverts blackish-brown centrally, with wide buffy white margins, greyish tips and irregular wavy barring and vermiculations of rufescent brown. Wing coverts rich rufous buff with wide white border to outer webs, with bold spots and lines separating the lines and bars. Lesser-coverts more greyish. Primaries and secondaries greyish brown edged on the outer web with buff.

Middle of chest rich rusty orange; sides of chest rufous buff, each feather with bold black cordate subterminal spot; lower breast and abdomen whitish buff shading to buff on the flanks; under tail-coverts rusty. Bill, bluish horn; legs pinkish white; iris yellow or cream. Wings 73-76 mm.

FEMALE ADULT:

Somewhat like the male but larger and more richly and brightly coloured. Forehead up to mid-line of eyes, supercilium, sides of head, chin and side of neck whitish buff, each feather with black tips, giving these areas a spotted appearance. Throat more uniform buffy white; crown to nape and upper part of mantle rich light chestnut, the feathers of the mantle with greyish margins and tips. A centro-dorsal buffy line down the crown. Pattern of feathers of the upper-side as in the male, as boldly marked but more rufescent. The wing coverts are more boldly marked, while the chest patch is richer orange, more extended reaching to the sides of the breast. Tail long and markedly pointed. Wings 83-88 mm.

JUVENILE:

In first feather, crown rufescent with black centres; white central line indicated by a few feathers; supercilium white; under-surface white except for the chest and sides of breast, these are striped with blackish-brown. Feathers on side of chest brownish with large bilateral subterminal white spots. Wing-coverts similarly marked; primaries greyish with buff margins to outer webs; secondaries with buff barring and white spotting. Dorsum of body rufescent brown with fine vermiculations of dark brown, the feathers of the mantle with white marginal spots. Bill and legs whitish pink; eye brown.

HABITS:

The Common Button Quail or Hemipod is an inhabitant of the drier more sandy areas of the Colony, where vegetation is short and the bush somewhat sparse; it also frequents old native cultivations. My experience has been that it is most plentiful along the coast,

inland to the Taru and through the Kedong to South Kavirondo; it is equally plentiful along the Northern Guasso Nyiro and Isiola. On Mombasa Island it is almost the only "game bird" left. One sees an occasional *Francolinus sephaena*).

From the sporting point of view the Button Quail is disappointing; they lie remarkably close, so much so that when they rise they get up almost at one's feet, and then they fly only a few yards, drop, and run to cover. Seldom have I been able to flush a bird a second time; but not infrequently if the cover has been poor I have captured the squatting bird with my hand. In thick cover the bird is as good as lost, unless one has a dog; even then, the dog, more often than the gunner, gets the bird. I have known a pointer to creep up and put his nose within an inch of a squatting bird and yet it would not move. The remarkable variegated plumage harmonises well with the surroundings and is very cryptic.

Insects enter largely into the diet of these birds, at certain time almost to the exclusion of seeds.

The species is resident in suitable localities throughout the year, though there is undoubtedly an influx of visitants at certain times; thus at Kisumu, during July, several birds were flushed in an old native Whimbi field—they were not there the previous week.

As will be seen from the wing measurements and the descriptions the female is not only larger than the male but handsomer, and in conjunction with this it is interesting to note that the female does practically no incubating of the eggs nor does she look after the young, leaving these duties to the male. We have found several nests and invariably, if a bird has been put off it has been the male. The nest is situated in a tuft of grass or beneath some stunted vegetation, and consists of a shallow depression lined with grass. The clutch consists of three to four eggs, pyriform in shape and ashy-grey-green in ground colour, spotted with reddish or purple brown mostly towards the larger end. They measure 22 x 18 mm. We have not seen a newly hatched chick but they are described as very quaint and no bigger than a large bumble Bee (Horsburgh).

The call note of the Button Quail is curious, being a full whistling "oo-up," the last note short.

Turnix nana, Sundv. Rufous faced Button Quail.

Ref. Sundeval, Oef. Vet. Akad. forhand., 1850.

Type locality, Natal.

Distribution: So far only in Uganda.

DESCRIPTION: MALE ADULT.

Crown of head to nape rufescent brown, each feather with white margins. Forehead, lores, supercilium, cheeks, and fore neck, orange-

tawny or rufous, which colour extends over the chest. Throat white or buff. Sides of chest rufescent brown with darker bars and white tips. Mantle and scapulars rufescent to chestnut, each feather with wavy bars and marked white margins; those along the edge of the scapulars with ochreous buff margins; back and rump darker brown; upper tail-coverts brownish with darker centres. Wing-coverts pale chestnut with wavy brownish bars and ochreous buff edges; lesser coverts greyer. Flanks and belly white; under tail-coverts rufous-buff.

FEMALE:

Like the male but larger, with coloration rather brighter.

JUVENILE:

Very like the young of *alleni*, but more rufous above and on the chest, the latter barred and striped with dark brown.

HABITS:

The Rufous-faced Button Quail does not to our knowledge occur in Kenya and its appearance in Uganda is rather remarkable. It is a species more confined to Natal and Nyassaland.

It is certainly not common, though on account of its retiring habits it has been overlooked. It frequents country where the vegetation is poor and the soil sandy and dry. It does not take wing readily and will seldom rise until one is on top of it. Its flight is straight but weak. It appears to be resident, and has been found breeding in July, October, and November. The nest is similar to that of the Common Button Quail. The eggs have a pale greenish ground heavily spotted with dark brown; there are four in the clutch.

In general habits this species resembles the "common" one and the call is somewhat similar, differing only in its lower pitch and more like "hoo-p."

GENUS ORTYXELOS, Vieill.

***Ortyxelos melffreni*, Vieill. Quail-Plover.**

Ref. Vieill. N. Dict. H.N., XXXV., 1818.

Type locality, Senegal.

Distribution: North Kenya and Uganda.

DESCRIPTION: MALE ADULT:

Crown of head brown with a buffy-white median line; supercilium and sides of head creamy; a brownish streak extends from the ear-coverts down the upper neck; mantle scapulars and back, pale red-brown, each feather with buffy or white edges, internally banded with black, body of feathers vermiculated with blackish. Rump more

uniform red-brown with black barring. Inner wing-coverts similar to scapulars, but with wider white; outer primaries buff at base and tips; inner primaries and secondaries, blackish with white ends; throat and undersurface, buffy white, darker on the chest, especially on the sides which may be rufous, barred with irregular wavy black lines and white-spotted. Wings 75-80. Eyes light brown; feet and legs yellowish white.

FEMALE:

Very like the male.

HABITS:

The Quail Plover frequents the dry sandy country where the vegetation is stunted and coarse. In such localities it can survive without coming to free water, obtaining sufficient moisture from its food. It keeps to the more open ground and may there be seen running about, but if disturbed it crouches, and if flushed it flies but a short distance, drops, runs a little way and crouches again, if still threatened. We have watched a bird run and crouch, and having marked the spot, as we thought, walked up to it, but no bird could be found until a glint of an eye attracted our attention to a slight hollow; there was the bird squatting tight, its colour remarkably like its immediate surroundings.

When moving on the ground this bird is very Courser-like; in fact we mistook it at first for a young courser, and it was not until we handled the shot specimen that its identity was revealed.

We have no personal knowledge of the nesting habits but Admiral Lynes describes the nest as a shallow depression in firm sand, near the foot of a bush, lined with a few leaves and stalks; the eggs, two in number, "oblate-oval" in shape, with slight gloss; ground colour stone with inky purple deep marks and surface blotches and spots of black. Size 17 x 14.

Breeding birds were collected in December and January, but beyond this we do not know the breeding seasons.